
Fear Fire on “Red Special”: Underwriters Refuse to Permit Socialist Train to be Decorated in City [Aug. 29, 1908]

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CAUTION

Tickets for the Socialist Party Cook County picnic in Alton Park will be on sale at the Union Depot and the station at Halsted Street and Archer Avenue. All those buying tickets at these stations must be careful so as to whom they buy them from. All official ticket sellers of the Socialist Party will wear a badge prominently displayed, marked “Ticket Seller.” All proper tickets will be stamped with the official seal of the entertainment committee. None other Should be bought.

The “Red Special” will arrive in Alton Park a plain, unimposing, everyday train. there will be nothing on the exterior that will denote its important mission. The “Special” will have to leave the Union Depot free of all decorations as a result of an order issued by the Fire Underwriters’ Association, which claims it would be dangerous to let the train be decorated with combustible material.

Decorate It at Picnic.

This will only add another feature to the picnic, for the “Red Special” will have to be decorated during the afternoon at the picnic grounds. the red flags will be on the “Special,” all right, but they will be signal flags of the railroad. Not only will the red flags wave proudly in the wind, but the red lights will be blazing as well. The railroad rules do not allow the display of any red flags other than those used

on the rear of the trains as signals. These will be plenty enough for the “Red Special” — the train that spells danger to capitalism.

As soon as it becomes dark enough in the park the picnickers will receive a surprise. A canvas sheet will be hung up in the dance pavilion or on the bandstand and pictures from Joseph Medill Patterson’s book, *A Little Brother of the Rich*, will be reproduced.¹

Young Socialists to Parade.

Members of the Young People’s Socialist League will march to the Union Depot in a body. They will wear armbands bearing the monogram of the league.² The members will meet at the YPSL Hall, 180 Washington [Chicago], at 9:30 o’clock in the morning and will leave for the Union Depot at 10 o’clock, in time for the 10:30 o’clock train. All those wishing to join in the march are invited to do so.

A letter was received yesterday from James H. Brower, Socialist candidate for Governor of Illinois, who will act as chairman of the picnic, stating that he will arrive at the park with a delegation of Socialists from Rockford, Ill.

Tickets can be purchased until a late hour tonight [Aug. 29, 1908] and Sunday morning [Aug. 30] at the county headquarters, 163 Randolph Street. Tickets will also be on sale in and around the Union Depot, Canal and Adams Streets, and at the station at Halsted Street and Archer Avenue. Those buying tickets at these two stations must be careful to see that those who offer tickets for sale wear the Socialist Party “Ticket Sellers” or “Committee” badge. All official tickets will be stamped with the Socialist Party Cook County seal.

Start from Union Depot.

All trains for the park will start from the Union Depot and will stop at Halsted Street and Archer Avenue to take on passengers. Trains leave the Union Depot at 9:15, 10:00, and 10:30 am and 12:30 and 2:15 pm. Trains will leave the park at 6:50 and 7:45 and

¹ This would seem to be a series of “magic lantern” slides shown in sequence to tell a story, featuring illustrations from novel *A Little Brother of the Rich* (1908), **Joseph Medill Patterson** (1879-1946). Patterson is best remembered as the founder and longtime publisher of the *New York Daily News*.

² Note this very early instance of paramilitary uniform display.

9:00 pm. round trip tickets with admission to the park, 50 cents; children, 25 cents.

The “Red Special” will leave for the park at 1 o’clock in the afternoon from the Union Depot. Tickets for the fifty mile ride on the “Special” can be had for \$2 each. Admission to the park without the railroad ticket is 25 cents.

Eugene V. Debs will reach Chicago in time to board the Red Special at 1 o’clock at the Union Depot tomorrow for the trip to Alton Park, where he will speak.

Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport

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